'THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALIST' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 39 October, 2014

EDITORIAL: Field Naturalists who attended the SEANA weekend at Portland in September had the opportunity of hearing Dr Peter Gill speak on his research with the endangered Blue Whale, in particular the Pygmy Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus brevicauda*), over 24m in length. Two species congregate off the Victorian coastline during the Spring months as cold nutrient-rich waters from the Antarctic rise from the deep sea-floor to the surface in a phenomenon known as the Bonney Upwelling off Portland, when the waters become the richest marine feeding area in Australia. As the upwelling season progresses, krill swarms become denser, supporting an amazing array of life.

As the Newsletter goes to press, there will be a full lunar eclipse in Melbourne on 8th October, known as a Blood Moon. Perhaps an opportunity for some of the Club's photographers to record a planetary event.

* *

Members getting together for lunch at the March weekend to Yanakie and Wilson's Prom

CONTENTS

Editorial 1

President's Annual Report 2

Programme Highlights 3

Nature Notes 8

Members' Contributions 12

Dates for your Diary 12

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

It's been another very successful year. We had strong participation and support by members across the club, highlighted by attendance at events and 5 full talks and 2 mini-talks at meetings. Our Show & Tell night was a terrific success. On behalf of the club I'd like to thank all members who volunteered for giving talks. They are greatly appreciated.

The camp-outs had a coastal theme with Lake Tyers and Wilson's Prom, both providing lots of interest. Thank you Alison & Peter and Hazel & Alan for running them.

The outings mainly focussed on the Eastern district of Melbourne. We visited some regular sites including Baluk Willam, Yea, and Lake Mountain, and included new or rarely visited sites such as Arthur's Seat, French Island and Dexter's Bush. We also visited the Melbourne Museum. I'd like to thank all excursion leaders for the work it takes to run an excursion and for doing a great job.

The website has continued to improve and has also been joined by the club's social media foray onto Facebook, which is accessible by all from the website, regardless of whether you have a Facebook account or not.

It's very important to recognise member contributions throughout the year, not just at AGM time and I hope that's evident in the regular running of the club. Saying that, this is the perfect time to give specific thanks to the Committee who make my job pretty easy.

I'd like to thank Alan as Vice President and Peter as Past President for their indispensable advice and support throughout the year. Thanks Ray for your continued work as Treasurer (past 11 years). Thank you Hazel as Secretary and Eleanor as assistant Secretary. Thanks David for your projector work, Alison for your always exceptional work on the program (11 years) and bringing flowers to meetings, thanks Bob for your gusto in the Librarian role and thanks Roger for supporting Bob a number of times as Librarian and your commitment to the running of the club.

Thanks Judith for your terrific work with the Newsletter, which you've been doing for 20 years now - a great achievement. Also for your support and advice throughout the year. Loris thank you for continuing to provide auditing services for the club's finances. You're also always thinking of the club - bringing exhibits of brochures or flyers or books to pretty much every meeting.

My biggest thank you is to all members as a whole. We are a great club and have many positive things going for us - this all comes from everyone who supports the club. Whether it's going on excursions, giving talks, showing photos, or coming to meetings you are all greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Jack Airey

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Field Trip to Morwell National Park - 16th November 2013

Leaders: Judi and Steve Duke

Twenty-four members attended. The morning was spent walking along Fosters Gully Walk where we were able to admire many blooms of Butterfly Orchids. We stopped at Lyndon's clearing for awhile where a koala was spotted across the creek and there was a lizard sunning itself on a log. We returned via the path we had walked along as the loop track became quite steep and was too long to complete before lunch. This was fortunate as on the return trip we were all able to have great views of Rufous Fantails and Yellow Robins. We had lunch in the picnic area at the car park. After lunch those who were up to a further walk headed off to Stringybark Ridge. The vegetation was in complete contrast to the morning's damp forest gully. The ridge was dry with relatively sparse undergrowth. Following the path we were able to find many varieties of orchids. Unfortunately the sun was not out so there were only a few sun orchids flowering. The orchids seen along here include Purple Bearded, Red Bearded, Bronze Caladenia, Large Duck, Common Bird and Pink Fingers. Animal count for the day includes Koala, Swamp Wallaby, and Echidna. The bird count for the day was 39, including Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow Robin, Grey Shrike Thrush, Spotted Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Superb Fairy Wren, White browed Scrubwren, Crimson Rosella, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike, and Rufous Fantail to name a few.

Weekend at Yanakie and Wilsons Prom - 28th-30th March 2014

Leaders: Hazel and Alan Veevers

Using Yanakie Caravan Park as our base, 31 members enjoyed perfect weather conditions for exploring the Prom. On Friday evening we walked around Duck Point on Corner Inlet, sighting many birds including White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Sooty Oystercatchers and Crested Terns. Lots of egg masses of the sand snail *Polinices sordidus* were found on the shore, together with a few of the snails themselves leaving tracks in the wet sand.

Weekend at Yanakie and Wilsons Prom (cont)

Saturday was a full day on the Prom, starting at Lilly Pilly Gully car park. The group split into two, one taking the circular track starting along a contour of Mount Bishop, the other taking the direct track to the Gully. Either way, ecologically diverse bioregions comprising Heathland, Eucalypt forest, Blackwood and Swamp Paperbark were passed through, ultimately reaching the boardwalk in the Warm Temperate Rainforest Gully itself. Rose Robin, Bassian Thrush and Beautiful Firetail (lucky for some!) were seen. Identifying the regrowth flora following the devastation caused by fire and tempest occupied us happily for much of the available time. Lunch was taken at Tidal River, after which the reconstructed Loo-Errn boardwalk led us to the river bridge from which many Soldier Crabs were seen scurrying to their muddy holes. Moving on to Norman Bay beach, a low tide allowed some beachcombing before we returned to the cars. On route, a Buff-banded Rail provided photographers with an excellent opportunity. Whisky Bay was the next stop, where the large granite outcrops created much interest as did a number of crustaceans and some Waratah anemones (*Actinia tenebrosa*). The traditional evening BBQ, held at the camp Cottage, was an enjoyable event with David Hewitt's "mothing" demonstration creating much interest and some theatre.

Sunday morning was spent at Darby River where the flora alongside the beach track was identified and enjoyed. The calcareous beach contrasted with that at Whisky Bay, the latter containing much quartz, since a geological change line is crossed in the vicinity of Darby Saddle. Afterwards, a drive to Five Mile Road in search of orchids produced some Parson's Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*) and also good specimens of Cranberry Heath (*Astroloma humifusum*). After lunch, a walk to Miller's Landing through Coast Banksia woodland revealed Hibbertia and Goodenia species flowering in the grassy clearings. At the shore many seabirds were identified and several Scarlet Robins were spotted on the return walk. After a cuppa and a debriefing session the well-satisfied group dispersed, some for home and others to spend a little more time in such a wonderful place. Thanks to Jack Airey for providing the bird list.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Field Trip to French Island - 13th April 2014

Organisers: Alison and Peter Rogers

Following our talk on French Island the previous week, 29 members headed over to the Island in Western Port Bay leaving from Stony Point on the ferry. We spent the day travelling all over the Island to wetlands and forested areas with Lois a local tour guide in her bus. Lois is a 4th generation Islander who knew the Island and its history like the back of her hand. We were shown many parts of the Island, with emphasis on birds (50 species for the day) and plants. We looked out over the mangrove coastal area and could see as far as Phillip Island. Our final stop was a Devonshire tea with homemade jams and sampling chicory coffee at Lois's historic 'Chicory' kiln. A very enjoyable day was had by all and I am sure we will visit again, maybe in orchid season.

Field Trip to Bunyip State Park – 17th May 2014

Leader: Jack Airey

On May's outing to Bunyip State Park 25 members and 1 guest enjoyed an unseasonably warm day with the temperature around 20°C.

After meeting at Mortimer's picnic ground we headed off on the nature trail, finding many species of fungi in the wet eucalypt gully along William Wallace Creek. We saw Bassian Thrush, Superb Lyrebird and Large-billed Scrub-wren, with Grey Fantail and Brown Thornbill seemingly everywhere. Crossing Tonimbuk Rd, the drier riparian forest and heathy woodland was very quiet, but we did find Golden Whistler, Lewin's Honeyeater and White-eared Honeyeater in the paperbark swamp on Diamond Creek. Back in the picnic ground we heard a Crescent Honeyeater and saw a pair of Red-browed Treecreeper.

After lunch we drove to Link Rd and did a loop walk which was very pleasant but quiet for birds. Following this we headed to Four Brothers Rocks, which are massive granite boulders, giving us terrific views of the Northern section of the park.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Visit to the Melbourne Museum - 15th June 2014

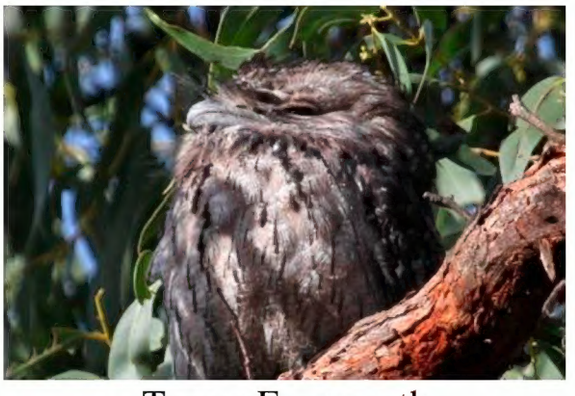
Leader: Lisa Nink

A small but enthusiastic group of members met outside the Forest Gallery and was conducted by Lisa, who works in the Museum, to the Science and Life section. Everyone was soon utterly engrossed in the spectacular array of natural history exhibits and cameras were busily recording what we saw. We examined the part played by Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace in explaining the process of evolution, the magnificent dinosaur hall with its collection of dinosaur replicas and fossils, the marine life section, the exquisite array of rocks and minerals from across the planet and extra-terrestrials from elsewhere in the solar system. We greatly appreciated Lisa's knowledge and expertise as we moved from one area to another and marvelled at her ability to keep up a fascinating commentary virtually non-stop for 2 1/2 hours.

Judith Cooke

Field Trip Dexter's Bush, Heathmont - 12th July 2014

Leaders: Warwick and Eleanor Dilley



Tawny Frogmouth

Twenty-one members came to visit Dexter's Bush in Heathmont. Liz and Mick Dexter bought five acres of land in Heathmont many years ago as a good place for their children to grow up. Their daughters rode ponies on the property, which contained a lot of pine trees and little else.

Some 20 years ago, with the family grown up, they decided to try to return the area to bush. Apart from a strip which was resumed by the Council because it bordered Dandenong Creek, they gave much of the land to Trust For Nature, which provided the assistance to take out and chip the pine trees.

Now the area is covered with bush including mature trees, middle storey plants and many flowering plants in the spring. The Dexters still live in their house, with one acre of garden. The bushland is open to the public and can be accessed at any time. Liz and Mick recommend visiting in November to see the flowers.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Field Trip to Kinglake National Park - 17th August 2014

Leaders: Eeva and David Hewitt

Despite dire warnings of terrible weather 24 members arrived at Jehosophat Gully in heavy fog. By 10:30 the fog had started to lift and we moved to Laver's Walk. We saw a substantial amount of recent storm damage with a number of fallen trees, but good recovery from the 2009 bushfires. We then travelled to Mason's Falls where there was a much greater variation in biota. Major highlights were an extensive viewing of a male lyrebird and large area of birdsnest fungi (*Nidula emodensis*), along with many other fungi (including *Daldinia* sp., *Stereum ostrea, Hexagonia tenuis, Stereum hirsutum, Podoscypha petalodes, Byssomerulius corium, Coprinellus disseminatus, Thelephora terrestris,* among others) and a variety of acacias in flower.

After lunch we travelled towards St Andrews and onto the Everard Track. There were a large number of flowering plants and evidence of 10 different orchids (*Pterostylis nutans, melagramma, pedunculata* and *nana*, and *Caladenia praecox* in flower and leaves and buds of five other species).

The weather remained fine but overcast for the whole day and we managed to see 31 species of birds.

Field Trip to Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne 6th September 2014

Leaders: Judith Cooke and Jack Airey

Morning walk

The objective of the morning walk was to visit Stage 2 of The Australian Garden, which had been opened in October 2012. We went via The Eucalyptus Walk, where we had the opportunity to enjoy the beauty and variety of Australia's iconic trees. Crossing into Stage 2 we examined the Gondwana Garden, representing the quite different vegetation that would have grown at the time the Australian landmass separated from Antarctica. We admired the spectacular display of Kangaroo Paws and other species growing among the rocks in the Weird and Wonderful Garden before finishing at Howson's Hill to see the single specimen of *Nuytsia floribunda* growing in eastern Australia.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Field Trip to Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne 6th September 2014 (cont)

Afternoon walk

We headed to the Stringybark picnic area for lunch. After lunch 14 members and 1 guest walked along the Wylie Creek Wetlands track. We enjoyed the beautiful Spring afternoon and were treated to great sightings of Pallid and Fan-tailed Cuckoo, a number of Honeyeaters, and a nesting pair of Spotted Pardalotes. We also had very close views of an Echidna, who posed for photos, 2 Jacky Dragons, fleeting glimpses of Southern Brown Bandicoot and good views of Swamp Wallaby, one in particular eating a Kangaroo Apple. We weren't able to locate the Koala that was seen on the recce but what we saw highlights how good the Royal Botanic Gardens can be for wildlife of all kinds. Returning to the carpark we said our goodbyes and headed home.

NATURE NOTES

Bunyip State Park 17th May 2014

BIRD LIST

Australian Wood Duck	Large-billed Scrubwren
Masked Lapwing	Brown Thornbill
Laughing Kookaburra	Striated Thornbill
Crimson Rosella	Australian Magpie
White-throated Treecreeper	Pied Currawong
Red-browed Treecreeper	Grey Currawong
Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Eastern Spinebill	Golden Whistler
Lewin's Honeyeater	Olive Whistler
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Fantail
White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Red Wattlebird	Rose Robin
Crescent Honeyeater	Eastern Yellow Robin
Superb Lyrebird	Varied Sitella
Spotted Pardalote	Welcome Swallow
White-browed Scrubwren	Bassian Thrush
	32 species

NATURE NOTES

Bird List Yanakie/Wilsons Prom March 2014

Emu	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Eastern Whipbird
Black Swan	Brown Falcon	Beautiful Firetail
Chestnut Teal	Rainbow Lorikeet	Red-browed Finch
Grey Teal	Galah	Golden Whistler
Pacific Black Duck	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Olive Whistler
Australian Wood Duck	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	Rufous Whistler
Cape Barren Goose	Australian King Parrot	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian White Ibis	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Yellow Robin
Royal Spoonbill	Eastern Rosella	Rose Robin
Little Egret	Gang-gang Cockatoo	Flame Robin
Great Egret	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Scarlet Robin
White-faced Heron	Crescent Honeyeater	Pied Currawong
White-necked Heron	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Currawong
Nankeen Night Heron	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Magpie Lark
Great Crested Grebe	White-eared Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Buff-banded Rail	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Forest Raven
Australian Pelican	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Butcherbird
Little Pied Cormorant	White-fronted Chat	Laughing Kookaburra
Pied Cormorant	Little Wattlebird	Bassian Thrush
Little Black Cormorant	Red Wattlebird	White-throated Treecreeper
Masked Lapwing	Willie Wagtail	Welcome Swallow
Silver Gull	Grey Fantail	*Common Starling*
Pacific Gull	Brown Thornbill	*Common Sparrow*
Crested Tern	White-browed Scrubwren	*Common Blackbird*
Caspian Tern	Superb Fairy-wren	*European Goldfinch*
Fairy Tern	Silvereye	*Spotted Dove*
Sooty Oystercatcher	Varied Sitella	Striated Fieldwren
Pied Oystercatcher	Spotted Pardalote	White-throated Needletail
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Striated Pardalote	Australasian Pipit
87 species		

NATURE NOTES

Dexter's Bush, Heathmont 12th July 2014
BIRD LIST

Australian Wood Duck	Red Wattlebird
Pacific Black Duck	Brown Thornbill
Common Bronzewing	Grey Butcherbird
Laughing Kookaburra	Australian Magpie
Galah	Grey Fantail
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Magpie Lark
Rainbow Lorikeet	Little Raven
Crimson Rosella	Welcome Swallow
Australian King-Parrot	Silvereye
Superb Fairy-wren	*Common Blackbird*
Eastern Spinebill	Tawny Frogmouth
Noisy Miner	23 species

Kinglake National Park 17th August 2014
BIRD LIST

Australian Wood Duck	Striated Thornbill
Australian Grebe	Buff-rumped Thornbill
White-necked Heron	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Australian Magpie
Laughing Kookaburra	Pied Currawong
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Currawong
Corella sp.	Grey Shrike-thrush
Crimson Rosella	Golden Whistler
Superb Lyrebird	Grey Fantail
White-throated Treecreeper	Magpie Lark
Eastern Spinebill	Little Raven
Red Wattlebird	Scarlet Robin
White-naped Honeyeater	Flame Robin
White-browed Scrubwren	Rose Robin
Brown Thornbill	*Common Myna*
Australian Wood Duck	31 species

Bird List French Island April 2014

Cape Barren Goose	Laughing Kookaburra
Black Swan	Nankeen Kestrel
Australian Shelduck	Galah
Australian Wood Duck	Superb Fairy-wren
Pacific Black Duck	Eastern Spinebill
Grey Teal	White-plumed Honeyeater
Chestnut Teal	Noisy Miner
Little Black Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
Pied Cormorant	White-fronted Chat
Little Pied Cormorant	Crescent Honeyeater
Great Egret	New Holland Honeyeater
White-faced Heron	Striated Pardalote
Australian White Ibis	Brown Thornbill
Royal Spoonbill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Grey Butcherbird
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Australian Magpie
Whistling Kite	Grey Currawong
Purple Swamphen	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	Willie Wagtail
Masked Lapwing	Grey Fantail
Black-fronted Dotterel	Magpie-lark
Silver Gull	Australian Raven
Pacific Gull	Welcome Swallow
Kelp Gull	Silvereye
Common Blackbird	*Common Myna*
Common Starling	51 species

Jack Airey

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

THE WALK

She swayed gently
her body drooped, wavered
a shadow in the sunlight
our hands stretched out
to break her fall

she folded down
like a spent leaf
and gently rested in her beloved
bushland

her breath like the breeze
fluttered softly
we pressed cool water to her skin
she melded into the green and brown

like a small wren - as we fluttered
around in concern

it was a safe soft landing
the earth received her
and she gave thanks
closed her eyes

and drifted a while
to rise with a smile
and continue her walk.

Cecily Falkingham

Dates for your Diary

13th-15th March 2015 - SEANA Weekend - Ballarat FNC

Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc. Reg.No. A 9601 ABN 29099297169
Website http://www.rfnc.org.au

Copyright © October 2014. Editor, Judith V Cooke